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2009 Pipeline Features Mentoring Sessions by State Bar Diversity Sponsors

by Marian Cover Dockery

Sixteen high school students participating in the 2009 Pipeline Program along with Emory University School of Law volunteer Laura Lewis and Princeton University senior and volunteer Noel Vinson entered the offices of Alston & Bird LLP for one of their daily law firm visits. Here the students participated in one-on-one mentoring sessions organized by partner Angela Payne James, chair of the firm's Atlanta Diversity Committee, and Rosalie Chamberlain, diversity manager, where 15 firm and summer associates gave valuable advice about pursuing legal careers. The group then visited Alston's courtroom where IP partner Frank Smith was preparing for an upcoming trial and explained his craft.

Earlier that week, the students visited Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC, Equifax



Photos by Roger Washington, Sutherland

Winners of the written and oral competition pose with Judge Kimberly Esmond Adams. (Left to right) Chelsey Parks, Tyler Mason, Judge Adams, Danielle Hayes and Kourtney Outlaw.

and Adorno & Yoss where they heard presentations on various topics. Baker's Charles Huddleston, a partner and chair of the Georgia Diversity Program Steering Committee, instructed the students to be "loud and proud" when introducing themselves. Four of Baker's attorneys then shared their diverse backgrounds: partner Mark Carlson, a Dartmouth and Harvard Law graduate, relayed his humble beginnings as a product of a



2009 Pipeline students at the oral and written competition hosted by Sutherland. (Back row, left to right) Marian Dockery (director of Diversity Program), Tyler Mason, Ryan Vinson, Danielle Hayes, Imari Blackwell, Jameek Barnes, Udy Obot, Terence McKenzie and Keelah Jackson (Pipeline teacher). (Front row, left to right) Lanerica Rogers, Jasmine Reid, Noel Vinson (Pipeline volunteer), Chelsey Parks, Kourtney Outlaw and Brianna Bogan.

single parent household; associate Megan Ouzts, a former college soccer player who graduated first in her class; associate Damany Ransom, a Morehouse and University of Michigan Law school graduate, was branded by his colleagues as an exceptionally good writer; and associate Erica Mason, former manager in the entertainment industry, explained why she decided not to practice entertainment law after law school.

Darren Moore, senior director and corporate counsel at Equifax, taught the students a remedial course in handling credit. A panel discussion with Equifax's in-house counsel coordinated by attorneys Richard Goerss and Jennifer Burns followed, and featured Kristin Brooks, Tamisa Greening and Robin Shetler. Paralegal Shannon Strachan moderated the discussion.

At Adorno & Yoss, partners Kenneth Southall, Auma Reggy, Cecilly Clark, Matt Williams and Romy Kapoor and associates Aja Diamond, Shawn Johnson, Kurt Schaehtinger, Roxann Smithers and Vickie Carlton-Sadler guided the attendees on resume writing techniques, effectively preparing for interviews and the appropriate use of e-mail and Facebook pages. Monica Jones, diversity manager,

planned the movie ice-breaker that opened the session prior to the luncheon and mentoring sessions.

The Pipeline Program, launched in 2008, teaches high school students critical skills — specifically grammar, writing and speech — needed to successfully excel in college and law school. The 2009 program began on May 26 and concluded on June 5. State Bar Diversity Program Director Marian Cover Dockery developed the speech curriculum for the program while Hapeville Middle School teacher Keelah Jackson developed the grammar and writing curriculum. Jackson, along with Chas Hamilton Jr., member of Teach for America Corps, taught grammar and writing each morning to the 16 students. The law firm of Parker Hudson Ranier & Dobbs LLP provided a light breakfast each morning before classes began. DLA Piper and AT&T also furnished supplies for the program.

Attorneys with previous careers as English teachers: Mary Bulls, National Labor Relations Board; Chandra Davis, McGuireWoods LLP; Trish Treadwell, Parker, Hudson, Rainer & Dobbs LLP; Angela Rumson, attorney; and Genny Zhu, Owen Gleaton Egan

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Jones & Sweeney LLP, assisted in teaching grammar and writing during the second week. Local attorney volunteers, Lovita Tandy, King & Spalding LLP; John Tyler, AT&T; Darius Patillo, DeKalb County District Attorney's office; Kwende Jones, Burr & Forman LLP; Kevin Wilson, clerk, Supreme Court of Georgia; Tomesha Faxio, attorney; Fred Dawkins, Freeman Mathis & Gary, LLP; Gerry Wells, DLA Piper US LLP; Femi Obadina, Rogers Law Offices; James Valbrun, Wotorson Thompson & Valbrun, P.A.; and Marian Dockery, Burwell Dearing Dockery, LLP, taught the daily speech classes. The teachers evaluated and rated the students' presentations on various topics including the crisis in Korea, the new Supreme Court nominee, the NBA finals and the pros and cons of monitoring the content of Facebook.

During week two, the students visited Cox Communications where Marcus Delgado, chief IP counsel, and Randy Cadenhead led a presentation on inter-generational communications. At

Troutman Sanders, associate Tashwanda Pinchback greeted the students and shared her words of wisdom with the students regarding college, law school and future careers. Pinchback was followed by Melba Hill, who taught an etiquette class during lunch with partners Mark Newman, Rebecca Shanlever and Diane Lidz and associates Shakara Barnes and Pinchback. The next day, Louise Sams, executive vice-president and general counsel of Turner Broadcasting System (TBS), welcomed the students before they enjoyed pizza and a "speed mentoring" session with TBS attorneys Patty Butler, Keith Henderson, Phillip Walden, Nick Corsello, Rachel Ruskin, Rich Taylor, Mira Koplovsky, Tina Shah, Regine Zuber, Segeda Ranjeet, Michelle Hylton, Ray Whitty, David Vigilante and Noni Ellison-Southall. CNN paralegals and personnel also participated in the mentoring event. A tour of CNN capped the students' visit.

Afternoon sessions included a presentation by Dr. Barbara Williams Emerson, daughter of

former Atlanta mayor Hosea Williams, regarding her experiences as a teenager during the events in Selma, Ala., and other cities in the South. During a tour of the Shepherd Center, outreach coordinator Pete Collman introduced students to paralyzed patients in wheelchairs, many close to their own ages. It was a wake-up call for the students who learned firsthand of the dangers of speeding, driving without seatbelts or while talking or texting on their phones and playing contact sports without helmets. A brief review of the disability laws preceded the tour.

At Swift Currie LLP, the students were entertained with a skit written by associate Ernessa Brawley where two interviewees' e-mail addresses and Facebook pages were scrutinized. A PowerPoint flashed the contents of each Facebook page on the screen. The first candidate, portrayed by associate Xavier Balderas, was very impressive in his interview. But an unprofessional e-mail address coupled with the content on his Facebook



Photo by Monica Skidmore, Alston & Bird

2009 Pipeline students and volunteers take a break during a session at Alston & Bird LLP.

page, including pictures of the candidate in a food fight and lying on the sidewalk inebriated, countered the excellent interview.

Associate Jennifer Guerra portrayed the role of a more conservative candidate. While she was less impressive than the first candidate in her interview, a search of her Facebook page pictured her posing with her mom at college graduation and then on a trip to Italy with friends, and had a much more professional e-mail address. The question of "Who would you hire?" was then posed to the students before they broke into small groups.


The Pipeline Program concluded with the written and oral competitions, judged by Sutherland attorney Jim Johnson and several Sutherland summer associates, who ranked students' essays and

oral presentations on the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The winners of the 2009 competition were:

- Best Overall Essay and Speech—Danielle Hayes, junior, Greater Atlanta Adventist Academy
- Best Essay—Chelsey Parks, senior, South Cobb Magnet School
- Best Speech—Kourtney Outlaw, junior, Grady High School
- Honorable Mention, Speech—Tyler Mason, sophomore, Druid Hills High School

The Hon. Kimberly Esmond Adams, Fulton County Superior Court, presented a certificate of completion to each student. Following her presentation, "Top 10 Points for Success in

Life," Adams presented monetary awards to the winners. Danielle Hayes received \$200, Chelsey Parks and Kourtney Outlaw each received \$100 and Tyler Mason received \$75 for their outstanding presentations.

For more information about the Pipeline Program and how your firm or company can help, contact Marian Cover Dockery at mariand@gabar.org. 



Marian Cover Dockery is an attorney with a background in employment discrimination and the executive director of the

State Bar of Georgia Diversity Program. For more information go to www.gabar.org/programs.

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The State Bar of Georgia Diversity Program presents the 17th Annual CLE and Luncheon, Sept. 30, 2009, at the Bar Conference Center from 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Please join us for "A Conversation with Chief Justice Carol Huntstein."

For registration and other information visit www.gabar.org.